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S E R M O N

Preached at the
F U N E R A L
O F
Ralph Bolton, Gent.
O F
H A N K E L O W,
I N T H E
C O U N T Y P A L A T I N E
O F
C H E S T E R,
I N T H E
Parish-Church of *Audlem*, in the
said County,
January the 24th, 1708.

By J. O L I V E R, M. A. Vicar *K*
of *Audlem*.

L O N D O N:
Printed for S. John Baker, at Thavies-Inn-Gate in
Holborn, 1709.

SERMON

Preached at the

FUNERAL

OF

Ralph Bolton, Gent.



W O W

COUN

OF

CHESTER

IN THE

Parish-Church of St. Andrew, in the

said County,

January the 24th, 1708

By J. OLIVER, M. A. Vicar

of Andover.

L O N D O N :

Printed for S. John Baker, at Theatrum-Regium in
Hollorn, 1709.

Ecclef. XII. Ver. 7.

*The Dust shall return to the Earth
as it was.*

MAN is a most wonderful Composition, being made up of two Parts, vastly differing in their Nature and Qualities; a rational Immortal Spirit, and a mortal corruptible Body. In respect of the *First*, he is the noblest Creature here below; being furnish'd with many excellent Powers and Faculties, a bright and large Understanding, which enables him to arrive at a vast and comprehensive Knowledge of Things, a great Freedom and Liberty of *Will*, to determine him in the Choice of *Good* and *Evil*; and when these Faculties were in full Perfection, as they were in the *State of Innocence*, he was truly the *Image of his Maker*, of Kin to the Angels above, and to the *first Eternal Spirit*, the Creator and Governour of the World. And altho' these Powers are mightily deprest, and sullied by the Fall of our first Parents, and thereby disabled in their proper and natural

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Offices,

Offices, yet is there a Method laid down in the Death of *Jesus*, by the means of *Grace*, and the Assistance of God's *Spirit*, to restore this Part of our *Nature* to its primitive Rectitude: And the State of Redemption is able to exalt us to a Pitch of Wisdom and Righteousness equal to that of our Original Creation.

But in Respect of the *Body*, Man can claim no higher a Descent than the Beasts of the Field, and the Fowls of the Air; the Earth being the common *Parent* of us all. And tho' our Bodies seem to be wrought up with more Art and Contrivance than those of other Animals, to render them fit Mansions for the *Soul* to lodge in, yet at first all was common *Clay* in the Hands of the Eternal Artist; out of which some *Vessels* have been fram'd to Honour, as others to Dishonour.

By what Ties or Ligaments these Two *Parts* of our Nature are united, so as to act upon, and affect each other, is a Mystery that all our *Philosophy* has not been able to explain; and tho' we are sensible by the Effects that there is such a close and intimate Conjunction, yet the Means of it are, and will

will be in the dark so long as the World stands.

But of this we are certain, that when the Bonds of Union fail, and the Body is no longer a fit Instrument for the Soul; when by Diseases or Age, the *Organs* are disabled, and the House is no longer fit to entertain the divine Inhabitant, then in the Language of the Preacher, *the Body shall return to the Earth as it was, and the Spirit shall return to God that gave it.*

Which Words point out to us the final *Dissolution* of our Nature, and the different Abodes the *Souls* and *Bodies* of Men are ordained to when sever'd by Mortality.

I shall consider them apart, and make such *Reflections* upon them as may be useful to us on this Occasion. And here in the

1st Place, The Body shall return to the Earth as it was.

Before the *Fall*, our very Bodies seem to be formed for Immortality: For *Death* was denounc'd against the first Man in Case of Transgression: *In the Day that thou eatest* Gen. 2. 17: *thou shalt surely die.* Now where no Transgression is, there can be no Punishment; it being against all Rules of Justice, *Humane*

or *Divine*, to punish where no Fault is committed ; and consequently *Death* was not the Condition of our innocent Nature, as our Countryman *Pelagius*, the Author of the *Herésie* that goes under his Name, fondly imagined, but a *Penalty* inflicted upon Man for Sin : So that had we kept our Station without violating any of God's Commands, our *Bodies* had been immortaliz'd by our Innocence ; and whatsoever Change or Alteration they had sustained in their Passage to the other World, it is certain *Death* had not been felt in the Removal.

But no sooner was the first Sin committed by him who stood as the common Representative of all Mankind, but immediately the Sentence went out against him, *Dust*
Gen. 3. 19. *thou art, and to Dust shalt thou return ;* and not against him only, but against his whole Race, who were to stand or fall by what he did. So that Mortality is the unavoidable State of our deprav'd Nature, as the *Apostle* argues,
Rom. 5. 12. *By one Man Sin entred into the World, and Death by Sin ; and so Death pass'd upon all, because all have sinned ;* And when the Sentence comes to be executed upon any of us, the *Body* soon loses all its Beauty and Majesty, goes down into the devouring *Grave* to rot and putrifie,
and

and turns again to its first Principle, common Dust. This is too plain a Truth to be longer insisted on, since every Day presents us with one Instance or other of it. I shall therefore pass over this Thought, and divert my Discourse to something more useful, and see if any Advantage will grow out of this sad and dismal Consideration. And sure some good Fruit may be had from it, if we consider what Arguments the Mortality of our Bodies will afford against most of the common Sins of our Lives, such as Pride, Covetousness, Sensuality; all which the Apostle sums up in these Words, *The Lust of the Eye, the Lust of the Heart, and the Pride of Life.* 1 Joh. 2: 16.

I begin with the first of these Sins, *Pride.*

That fond overweening Humour which makes us look with a Kind of Reverence upon our selves, and with as much Contempt upon all those we imagine beneath us. Nothing will more effectually subdue this vain Folly, than a due and serious Consideration of Mortality. From what Root soever this Vine springs, whether from a Conceit of any personal Excellency, or from

from an *Apprehension* of the Rank or Degree we hold in this World; or from any *Opinion* of our Fortunes and Possessions. A sober Reflection now and then upon the *Circumstances* of the *Grave* will take down the most aspiring Thoughts of this Nature, and level them with that very *Earth* from whence we had our Beginning, and to which we are all returning very fast. Are you fond of any bodily Perfection? Do you pride your selves in the Briskness and Vigour of Youth? In the Beauties of the Face? The Delicacy of Shape, set off with all Improvements of Art and Expence? Go down into the Chambers of the *Dead*, and rifle all the Treasures of the *Grave*, and see what you can find of all this: There Beauty turns to Deformity, and Proportion to a Heap of Rubbish; *instead of well set Hair* you will meet with *Baldness* in the *Prophet's* Phrase, or a *naked Skull*; *instead of a sweet Smell, a Stench*; and all the Glory of the outward Man turns to that which we behold with a silent Horror and secret Detestation, even to *Rottenness* and *Putrefaction*. And are these Things a reasonable Foundation of *Pride* and *Haughtiness*; or rather are they

they not strong Inducements to Humility and Lowliness of Mind?

Do you value your selves upon the Rank and Degree you hold in the World? Upon the Nobleness of Blood, or the Length of a Pedigree, the Number of your Attendants, or the Pomp of Equipage, and think these Things will license you to insult over and despise your Inferiors? Go down to the *Grave*, and see what you can find of all this. *Death* is the greatest Leveller in the World, that equals all Degrees, and confounds all Distinctions in the Regions below; there is no Difference betwixt the Prince and the Beggar; the *Ashes* of the one have as much of Quality in them as those of the other, and mix without Strife, and there is no more insisting upon Distance or Respect. When a Man is once dead, no matter what his Descent was, whether of noble Blood, or the Dregs of the People: *Nil refert, sub dio jacebit victima nil miserantis Orci*; he falls a Sacrifice to unrelenting Fate, and all the Marks of Distinction cease for ever, says the Poet: And a better Poet, the divine Author of the *Psalms* tells us, *The Man of Honour without Understanding, is fitly compared to the Beasts that perish; like them he dies,* Psal. 49. 20.

dies, and in a little Time converts into the same *Elements* they do.

Is it Riches and a great Fortune that you glory in? Is it vast Demesnes, and magnificent Buildings, and a great Train of Vassals and Dependants that swell your Thoughts, and set you so much higher in your *Opinion* than the rest of Mankind? Look forward to the Land of Darkness, and see what remains of all this after Death. There the largest Estate is compris'd in Six Foot of Earth, and the noblest Palace dwindles into a *Grave-Stone*, or a Monument, and all the Attendants that wait on us there, are what grow out of our own Bowels, *Worms and Insects*, and all our Treasure shrinks up into a Coffin and a Winding-sheet: And are these Things a just Ground of *Pride* and Haughtiness? It is true that even the Goods of the *Body* and of Fortune have their Value, and deserve Esteem where they are laid out as they ought to be. High Birth and a noble Descent make a glorious Figure, when they are attended with the Christian Virtues of Meekness, and Humbleness of Mind; and the best Train that waits upon a great Fortune are *Justice* and *Beneficence*, and a generous Dispo-

Disposition to do Good; but without these, they are Things of little worth, which the wisest of Men have ever thought below their *Care*, and which the best of Men have not scrupl'd to sacrifice, and with them their *Lives* also to their Duty and Conscience: And if any Thing in the World can wean us from an over-high *Opinion* of these Things, it is the Consideration of Mortality.

II. A *Second Vice* is *Covetousness*, or an excessive Desire of Riches. And if any Thing can abate and mortifie this *Lust*, it is a serious Reflection upon our latter *End*. Consider the Ways of the *Miser*, see what Recompence he has for his Pains when *Death* arrests his *Body*, and invades his Possessions; and you cannot be ignorant of the Folly and Unreasonableness of this *Sin*. This Man condemns himself to the worst Sort of Slavery; Day and Night he digs in the *Mine*, and scrapes for Treasure which he hath not Power to convert to any Purposes of Life: Cares and Fears are his constant Companions, and a perpetual Anxiety attends all his Motions: His *Life* is one continual *Penance* of his own pre-

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scribing,

scribing, made up of fasting Days, and watching Nights; and *Nature* is ever complaining of Injustice, but to no Purpose. *Right* and *Wrong* are all one with him, for every Thing is right and just with him that makes for his *Interest*, and every Thing is wrong that contradicts it: The Widow's House, and the Orphan's Patrimony, go down sweetly with him, without the *Pharisee's* Formality of a Prayer; and Injustice, when it serves his turn, pleases him as well *barefac'd* as under a *Mask* of Hypocrisy: In a Word, *Mammon* is the only God he serves, and to that he makes large *Oblations*, viz. his *Time*, his *Pains*, his *Soul* and *Conscience*. This is the Way of this Man, and what is the Fruit of his Labour? Why, as his Wealth was useless during Life, so it proves also at his Death. For Riches profit not in the Day of Wrath; they cannot spin out the *Thread* of Life one *Inch* longer, nor procure one Minute's Respite, nor compound for one single *Breath*, but the fatal *Messenger* seizes Body and Goods; the one goes to the *Grave*, where it rots much slower than the Memory of the deceas'd; the other very often into the Hands of a profuse *Heir*, where it wastes much faster than

it was got; sometimes to Owners that were never thought of, and not seldom proves a Matter of Contention amongst the surviving Friends: And what was scraped together by *Injustice*, is at last squander'd away in a *Law-Suit*: And were there no Account to be made of this Sin of *Covetousness* in the other World, what wise Man would undergo all that Drudgery this *Vice* draws after it, for just nothing; (for such is Wealth to the *Miser*) whatever it is in its self, yet 'tis nothing to him: He hath the Possession indeed, but not the Enjoyment; he starves in the midst of Plenty, and makes Poverty his Choice, which other Men count their greatest Plague and Misfortune, and his *Death* is equally miserable as his *Life*, nay, this Man may be said to die a double Death, the *Parting* with what he can no longer keep, being as painful to him, as the *Dissolution* of Soul and Body, attended with Agonies, Convulsions, and a distracted Mind. And how much better has *Religion* provided for our Ease and Happiness, did we observe its Rules, and follow its Directions? For that permits a moderate Use of the Blessings of this Life, to make our Time

and our Abode here comfortable to us ; and by devoting what can be spar'd to the Uses of *Charity*, will establish us a Reputation here on Earth, and procure us Friends on the other Side the *Grave*, which will conduct us into the Regions of Eternal Happiness.

The *last* Thing I mentioned, was *Sensuality*, the Indulging our Appetites in any Respect beyond the Bounds that Reason and Religion have prescrib'd. The *Epicure* abandons himself to all kind of *Excess*, denies his Senses nothing that they call for ; his Invention is constantly employ'd to find out new Entertainments, and all his Hours are spent in a *Circle* of Debauchery, in rolling from one Sort of Intemperance to another ; and this he thinks is the true Way of living, and what is the *Result* of all ? Why, this laborious *Course* of Sin, lays a Foundation for infinite Distempers, and renders him incapable of injoying those Follies he hungers after ; they shorten his Days, and anticipate his Fate, and when they have brought him to his *Death-bed* ; then Pleasure flies away

away for ever, and leaves nothing behind it, but a painful Remembrance of what can be no longer enjoy'd by him, and a direful Prospect of the Evils that are before him, and the Sinner goes down to the Grave with a deep Regret at parting with his old Companions, and a dismal Apprehension of that Society, he is posting to. The *Heathens* thought to remedy these Evils, by casting into the Funeral Pile all those Things, which the Person deceas'd took Pleasure in during Life, supposing that these Things would wait on him in the other World, and afford him the same Diversion there as they did in this. *Vain Divinity!* For when the Soul is once disjoin'd from the Body, it's no longer capable of *sensitive* Delights, but spends all its Time in Hopes of approaching Happiness, or Fears of ensuing Miseries; and when our Senses are fast bound up in the Sleep of Death, farewell all the Entertainments of Life for ever. And what wise Man wou'd indulge and pamper his Appetite at this rate only, to create Distempers, and hasten his latter End, and to bring Old-Age with all its Infirmities

Infirmities so much the faster upon him. And how much more prudent is a regular Conduct, and an innocent Enjoyment of the good Things of this Life, which guides a Man to his Long-home with Sense and Understanding, and a hopeful *View* of a comfortable Being after Death.

But though our *Bodies* shall return to *Earth*, and there mix with common *Clay*, and resolve into their *native Elements*, yet shall they not always lie there: The Grave is only a *Dormitory*, or *Sleeping-place*, where our *mortal Nature* rests secure till the general Resurrection, and then they shall as certainly come forth, all that have done *Good* to the Resurrection of Life, and all that have done *Evil* to the Resurrection of *Condemnation*. And this Consideration will in a great Measure abate the Thoughts of Mortality, furnish new Matter to our Hopes, and excite our Industry in the Ways of God, that at our next Appearance we may come forth from our *dark Prisons* in all that Glory, and Splendor, which shall attend those that have slept in the Lord Jesus. Which is

The *second Reflection* I shall make upon these Words. That there shall be an *universal* Restauration of all our *Bodies* at the great Day, is a Point of Faith so clear, that it hath met with less Opposition than most other *Articles* of our Creed.

The *Heathen* World indeed was ignorant of this great Truth. And when St. Paul preached this *Doctrine* to the People of *Athens*, the News was so surprising, that they took *Jesus* and the *Resurrection* for two Deities, lately introduced into the World by the Christian Sect: and no wonder it was so, that so important a Matter shou'd stand in need of an *infallible* Testimony to convince us of its Certainty. And yet after the Revelation, our Reason finds so much of Probability in this Work as may abundantly serve to establish our Belief of it. For why should we think this too hard for Omnipotence? Or that an *Almighty* Power and Wisdom, which have discover'd themselves in so many wonderful Instances in *Nature*, should be at a Loss here? That Hand that hath put the Creation into this *regular* Frame, that hath fix'd the Earth upon *Pillars* that never should move, and hath spread the *Heavens*

Heavens over it as a *Canopy*, full of Lights, to scatter their Influence on all Parts of this lower World; and has set Bars and Limits to the *vast* Ocean, which it cannot pass: That has fill'd all the Parts of the Universe with a *wonderful* Variety of Creatures, and given them Laws for their Continuance, and Propagation, and drew this beautiful Piece of Nature from a dark *confus'd* Chaos, and that rude Heap of Matter out of *nothing*, what can be imagined too difficult for it? So that the Restauration of all our Bodies must be acknowledged as sensible to such an *infinite* Agent, as any other Production in Nature whatsoever. And when to all this reasoning the *Gospel* has superadded an *infallible* Assurance, nothing sure can be wanting to establish our Faith; and all the Objections of *carnal* Men, who are always ready to dispute what they are not willing to believe, must vanish away in the Presence of so much Light.

We may *therefore* be confident, since we have the Word and Promise of an *infallible* Being for it; that there is a Day fixt, when all the *Prisons of the Grave shall be broke open*, when the Earth and Sea shall deli-

deliver up all the Captives detain'd in them ; when the Empire which *Death* has extended over all Ages and Generations of Mankind shall have a *Period* ; for this is the last Enemy that shall be destroy'd, and the *Bodies* of all Men shall obey the *Summons* of the Arch-angel, and awake at the *Trump* of God, and every *Body* shall wait for its old Companion the *Soul*, to share with it in the Retributions of Eternity. And yet,

In this *general* Appearance, there will be a vast Difference ; *some* shall come forth with Shame, and Confusion, and a wonderful Astonishment, with Horror and Despair in their Countenances, and shall cry to the Rocks and Mountains to hide them from the Presence of the Judge, and of that *vast* and *glorious* Assembly which will then attend his *Sentence* ; and wish to be *annihilated* rather than enter upon that Eternity of Miseries that is before them.

And *others* shall appear in great Glory and Splendor, like the *Stars* in the *Firmament*, with bright and cheerful Countenances, and a *surprising* Majesty in their whole Frame, to render them fit Mansions for *refin'd* and *sanctified* Souls, and in that ex-

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1 Thes. 4. 16. alted State to converse with God himself, and the blessed Angels, and Jesus their Redeemer, for Ever and Ever. So the Apostle tells us, that the Dead in Christ shall rise first, and such as had their Conversation in Heaven during their Abode here on Earth, Phil. 3. 21. shall have their vile Bodies fashion'd like unto the Glorious Body of Christ, and in that glorified Body shall ascend up with him into the highest Heavens, where they shall be for ever with the Lord.

From which last Words we may make some Conjecture of the Condition in which the Bodies of the Just shall rise at the last Day, for they shall be like the Glorious Body of Christ.

And that Glory our Lord discovered Mat. 17. 2. more than once when he was upon Earth; once at the Transfiguration upon the Mount, when Moses and Elias came down to converse with him, when his Countenance was like the Sun, and his Raiment white as Snow, beyond all that humane Art could effect; and the amaz'd Apostles imagining themselves in Paradise, began to think of a Settlement, Let us make Three Tabernacles; and so on. A second Time when he appeared Mat. 17. 4. to St. Paul in his Journey to Damascus, Acts 9. when

when the Brightness of the Vision depriv'd him of his Sight. A *third Time* when he appeared to St. John in the *Isle of Patmos*. Rev. 1. In all which Places as our Blessed Saviour displayed his own Glory to the Eyes of his Servants, he also gave them some Intimation of what was reserv'd for them after a short Life spent here in his Service, and what Share their very Bodies should have in the State of Recompence, when *this corruptible should put on Incorruption, and this mortal should put on Immortality*, that then even the Bodies of the Saints should appear like Angels for Beauty to attend their glorified Master for ever.

From which last Consideration I shall draw an Inference or two, and conclude.

1st, If there be such a Certainty of our Resurrection at last, this will in a great Measure abate and moderate the Thoughts of Mortality. Tho' we cannot alter our Fate, nor reverse the Decrees of Heaven, but every one of us at the appointed Time must be laid to our Fore-fathers, and see Corruption; yet our Comfort is, that the Gospel hath begotten us to a lively Hope through Christ Jesus, the first Fruits from

the Dead, and given us all the Assurance we can desire that we shall follow his Example, and that as in the *first Adam* we must all die, so in the *Second* we shall all be made alive. And tho' *Death* be an uneasy Passage; yet when we consider it as the Pangs to a *new Birth*, and that in order to a glorious *immortal* State, if we take that Care that concerns us here, that Thought is able to disarm *Death* of its Terrors, and will fortifie us against the Approaches of it, and put us in a Capacity of enduring it with some tolerable Patience; and Moderation at least.

2. This will also mitigate our Concern for the *Loss* of our Friends and Relations. *The Apostle bids us not to be sorry, as Men without Hope for them that sleep in Christ:* If our departed Friends are of that Number, there is more Reason to rejoice at the Change of their Condition, than by a violent and *unmanly* Passion to deplore and lament it. For then they have past the *Waves* of a troublesome World, and are safe landed upon a happy Shore, and look back with infinite Satisfaction upon the Perils they have escap'd, and are out of Danger for ever. And should we afflict

1 Thes. 4.
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our selves beyond Measure, that those whom we love and esteem, are in such a blessed State? And tho' we have *lost* them for this Life, yet are they not absolutely *lost*; the Memory of their good Actions should be precious to us, and engage us to *imitate* their Virtues, and *follow* their Examples, and then a little Time will restore us to them again, and enter us into a more happy Conversation, when all the Infirmities of this mortal State are done away, and such an one as will never be interrupted again.

Lastly, This Consideration will engage us to pass our Time here in Temperance, Soberness, and Chastity; to mortify our Members that are upon Earth, *viz.* Fornication, Uncleaness, Lasciviousness; to subdue and keep under every *inordinate* Appetite, and *brutal* Inclination, that our Bodies may come forth in the next World with all that Glory that shall attend the Resurrection of the Just: The Apostle urges this with great Importunity, I beseech you Brethren, by Rom. 12. the Mercies of God, that you present your Bodies a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable Service. And be not conform'd to this World, but be transformed

formed by the renewing of your Mind: And elsewhere with a passionate Concern, ad-
 Phil. 3. 18, viles us not to walk as some do, who are e-
 19, 20, 21. ven Enemies to the Cross of Christ, whose God
 is their Belly, whose Glory is in Shame, who
 mind earthly Things. But rather to have
 our Conversation in Heaven, whence we look
 for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who
 shall change our vile Body, thus kept under
 by Religion, and a due Government, that
 it may be like his glorious Body, according to
 the mighty working whereby he is able to sub-
 due all Things to himself.

I have now done with my Text, and
 must crave your Patience a little longer,
 whilst I pay what I think justly due to the
 Memory of this worthy Gentleman deceas'd.
 The Relation he bore to the noble Founder
 of our Publick School, ought not to be pass'd
 over in Silence; and the great Advantages
 for Education we here enjoy, by the pi-
 ous Munificence of one of his Ancestors, will
 cast a Lustre upon all the Branches of this
 Family for ever; and may (when Occa-
 sion serves) prove an Encouragement to
 the Heirs of it to imitate the glorious Ex-
 ample that is before them, and to aug-
 ment that Charity which is so happily
 begun

begun amongst us. But because the Virtues of our *Ancestors* can be of no Use to us, but where they excite to Emulation, and engage us to follow their Example, by some *personal* Attainments of our own, it must be granted, that this *Gentleman* had a considerable *native* Stock within himself: When *just* Allowances are made for humane Frailty, (and without that the Characters of the best Men will seem very dark and obscure) it cannot be denied, but that He was truly a *worthy* Person. His *Conversation* was always open and sincere, without those Arts of Disguise which are too frequently practised in the World. His *Generosity* to his Neighbours and *Liberality* to the Poor are not unknown to those that were acquainted with him, and an *affable* Carriage, without the *Extreams* of Pride and Haughtiness, gain'd him Respect from all that knew him. And what was beyond all this, He was a true Friend to the Church, both to the *Service* and *Maintenance* of it: We never wanted his Presence at our Prayers or Sacraments whilst his Health permitted, and the Openess and Freedom of his Beha-

Behaviour in smaller Matters may well induce us to believe that a *pious* and *Christian* Sincerity attended all his publick and religious Performances. And as he had so true a Value for the Service of the Church, he had no less for its *Maintenance*; to which he ever contributed with a great deal of Frankness and Generosity: In this *Manner* he spent his Days, and in this *Manner* he chose to finish them. The Sacrament was his last *Viaticum*, and he receiv'd it with *fervent* Expressions of Faith and Charity, Duties *absolutely* necessary to that Service, and the *best* Dispositions to seal up our Days and our Accounts together. And now all that's left of him here below are these *perishing* Remains, which are going very fast to their native Original of Dust and Ashes, but not without *Hopes* of a glorious Restitution at the great Day, to share, together with his departed Spirit, in those *unconceivable* Recompences that are reserv'd for just and righteous Souls.

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